

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 SIL-01 LAB-04

PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /080 W

----- 131070

R 270805Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2093

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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BEIRUT FOR CIVIL AIR ATTACHE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, LY, FR, BU

SUBJECT: LIBYAN AIR LINES GROUNDS ITS AIR FRANCE CREWS

1. LIBYAN ARAB AIRLINES HAS OPERATED FOR NUMBER YEARS UNDER FLIGHT AND MAINTENANCE OPERATION CONTRACT WITH AIR FRANCE. RELATIONS BETWEEN AIR FRANCE PERSONNEL AND LAA HAVE BEEN QUITE BAD IN RECENT MONTHS. LAA PILOTS AND GROUND PERSONNEL RESENT BETTER SALARIES AND BENEFITS PAID TO AIR FRANCE EMPLOYEES AND THERE HAS BEEN RUNNING DISPUTE OVER THIS FOR SOME TIME. LAA PILOTS HAVE ALSO FELT AIR FRANCE WAS UNNECESSARILY SLOW ABOUT LETTING THEM STEP INTO SHOES OF FRENCH PILOTS.

2. THIS DISPUTE CAME TO A HEAD OVER AN INCIDENT IN BENGHAZI IN MID-MARCH. AIR FRANCE STEWARD HAD CARRIED A SACK CONTAIN-

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ING SILVER AND JEWELRY FROM PARIS, AND WHEN THE SACK BRIEFLY

FAILED TO TURN UP AT ITS DESTINATION HE WAS CLAPPED IN JAIL.
(LIBYAN AIR LINES LATER FOUND THE SACK.) IN SOLIDARITY
WITH THE JAILED STEWARD, ALL 13 AIR FRANCE CREWS
(BUT NOT MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL) IN BENGHAZI DEMONSTRATED
AND STRUCK. LIBYAN AUTHORITIES RETALIATED BY SUSPENDING THEM,
AND MATTER HAS RESTED THERE.

3. LAA FLEET CURRENTLY CONSISTS OF TWO 727'S AND FIVE
CARAVELLES. ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH EMBASSY, THERE IS
ONLY ONE QUALIFIED LIBYAN FLIGHT CREW FOR THE 727'S AND NONE
FOR THE CARAVELLES. IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT ITS SCHEDULE,
LAA WAS THUS OBLIGED TO HIRE TWO TUPOLEV 154'S FROM BALKAN
AIRLINES (BULGARIAN) WITH CREWS, AND THESE PLANES ARE NOW
FLYING LAA ROUTES TO EUROPE AND CERTAIN POINTS IN NORTH
AFRICA. ALL CARAVELLES ARE GROUNDED. IN ADDITION, THREE
NEW 727'S LIBYAN AIR LINES HAS BOUGHT FROM BOEING ARE IN
PARIS WITH SIX AIR FRANCE CREWS WAITING TO BE FLOWN HERE,
BUT UNTIL DISPUTE IS SETTLED NO ONE IS MOVING. CREWS HERE
ARE ALSO SCHEDULED TO BE ROTATED AT END OF MARCH.

4. FRENCH EMBASSY INFORMS US THAT ON MARCH 26 TWO NEGOTIATORS
FROM AIR FRANCE ARE ARRIVING IN TRIPOLI TO TRY TO STRAIGHTEN
OUT THE MESS. FRENCH HOPE VERY MUCH THAT TWO SIDES WILL
COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING, AS AIR FRANCE CONTRACT IS LUCRATIVE
ONE. THEY POINT OUT LIBYANS HAVE NOT DENOUNCED THE CONTRACT
WITH AIR FRANCE AND THAT RENTAL OF PLANES AND CREWS FROM
BALKAN AIR LINES IS NOT A SITUATION THAT CAN LAST. EMBASSY
ALSO FEELS ITS PILOTS HAVE SHOWED RATHER SHORT FUSES.

5. UNTIL THIS TYPICALLY LIBYAN AFFAIR BLOWS OVER (LIBYAN
CONCESSIONS MAY BE NEEDED TO GET THE FRENCH CREWS
BACK ON THE JOB) SUGGEST THAT USG EMPLOYEES AVOID FLYING
LIBYAN AIR LINES, IF ONLY BECAUSE LAA SCHEDULES MAY BE
PERTURBED. THERE IS ALSO QUESTION OF SAFETY. DEPT
MAY WISH TO BRING PROBLEM TO ATTENTION OF FAA AND SEEK
ITS ADVICE AS TO SAFETY OF BALKAN AIR LINES TU-154'S AND
CREWS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WAGES, AIRCRAFT PILOTS, AIRLINES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TRIPOL00348
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750107-0742
From: TRIPOLI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975038/aaaaagss.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <02 JUN 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LIBYAN AIR LINES GROUNDS ITS AIR FRANCE CREWS
TAGS: EAIR, ELAB, LY, FR, BU, AIR FRANCE, LIBYAN ARAB AIR LINES
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006